

**Statement of
Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
Seneca High School
Erie, Pennsylvania
July 1, 2009**

Good Afternoon. I am so pleased to be here in Erie.

It is an honor to be here with the Vice President, Secretary Locke, Secretary Vilsack, Assistant Secretary Strickling, and Congresswoman Dahlkemper.

I want to thank Seneca High School for hosting us today.

What's bringing us all here today are the serious challenges facing our country and the powerful opportunity for us to tackle them by bringing 21st Century communications to all Americans – from our inner cities to our small towns and the broad reaches of rural America.

Earlier this year, President Obama worked with Congress to enact a plan to jumpstart our economy. Broadband is a key part of that plan – both near-term grants for broadband expansion, and a longer term national strategy.

As Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, I want to briefly tell you why I believe this matters to you.

It matters for the same reason that previous generations built systems of canals, and railroads, and interstate highways, and a telephone network that stretched to every corner of America. Infrastructure, a clunky word, I know – but infrastructure matters. It is the way jobs and commerce, innovation and progress of all kinds – in education and health care and energy – are spread across the country. And in the 21st Century, broadband infrastructure will be the platform for growth and opportunity for us, our children, and our children's children.

Unfortunately, we as a nation have been lagging when it comes to broadband, falling behind too many countries. This is unacceptable. We must do better.

Now, the U.S. is doing better in one important category: broadband connections in schools – schools like this one.

Why are we lagging in many broadband categories but comparably better in linking classrooms?

Because we had a plan.

In the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Congress enacted a program called the “E-Rate” to provide discounted Internet access in schools and libraries. The FCC implemented the plan and our country has made real progress – though there's much more to do in this area.

Today, as the government moves quickly on billions in much-needed broadband grants, we are also moving on a broadband strategic plan for the entire country so that we can renew American leadership and competitiveness for the 21st Century.

Congress has tasked the FCC with developing a National Broadband Plan for America – a plan to accelerate economic growth, create jobs and spur innovation, connect small businesses so that they can compete everywhere, improve educational opportunities, help deliver better health care and cleaner energy at lower cost, and extend the benefits of the broadband revolution to our police and fire-fighters who depend upon communications for protecting their own safety and ours.

Over the next few months the FCC will host a national discussion about the design of this plan – around the country and online. Please get involved. Tell us about the needs of your community and your hopes and aspirations for the National Broadband Plan. This is about those who we risk leaving behind if we don't pursue a national broadband strategy.

One person who I know is hard at work in Washington bringing the benefits of better broadband back to Pennsylvania is your Member of Congress, Representative Kathy Dahlkemper. She serves on the Committee on Agriculture, which oversees the rural broadband program in the Department of Agriculture, the Committee on Science and Technology, and the Committee on Small Business, and she knows well how important high speed, affordable broadband access is to individual Americans and to small businesses both here and around the country.

It is my great honor to introduce to you Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper.

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